

Message Text

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USMISSION GENEVA

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AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PERTH

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: ETRD, EMIN, AS, JA

SUBJ: DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ANTHONY TO VISIT JAPAN

1. IN RELEASE FOLLOWING FIRST MEETINGS OF NEW L-NCP CABINET JANUARY 13 AND 14, PRIME MINISTER FRASER ANNOUNCED THAT DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR NATIONAL RESOURCES AND OVERSEAS TRADE, DOUGH ANTHONY, WILL VISIT JAPAN FROM FEBRUARY 4 TO FEBRUARY 14. HE IS TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY A DELEGATION WHICH WILL INCLUDE SECRETARY OF DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS TRADE, D.H. MCKAY, AND SECRETARY OF DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL RESOURCES, J. SCULLY. A SENIOR OFFICER OF DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRY WILL ALSO BE INCLUDED.

2. PURPOSE OF VISIT IS TO HOLD TALKS ON "MATTERS

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RELATING TO AUSTRALIA'S MINERALS AND ENERGY RESOURCES

AND OVERSEAS TRADE". PRIME MINISTER REAFFIRMED THAT JAPAN IS "ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD" FOR AUSTRALIA. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT "IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAS BEEN AN EROSION OF JAPANESE CONFIDENCE IN AUSTRALIA AS A LONG-TERM SOURCE OF SUPPLY". HE SAID ALSO THAT "CONFIDENCE OF AUSTRALIAN EXPORTERS HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY JAPANESE IMPORT POLICIES", PARTICULARLY IN BEEF AND DAIRY PRODUCTS. FRASER SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD WORK TO SEE THAT CONFIDENCE IS RESTORED IN BOTH THESE AREAS.

3. PRIME MINISTER ALSO REFERRED TO TEMPORARY IMPORT RESTRAINTS WHICH AUSTRALIA HAD RECENTLY IMPOSED, AND ACKNOWLEDGED JAPANESE GOVERNMENT EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN. HOWEVER, HE SAID ONLY THAT THOSE MEASURES WERE CONSISTENT WITH AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND WOULD BE RELAXED AND REMOVED AS SOON AS CONDITIONS PERMIT.

4. COMMENT: TRADE RELATIONS WITH JAPAN, OFTEN CONFUSED IF NOT STRAINED DURING THE WHITLAM YEARS, ARE PRESUMABLY HIGH ON FRASER'S LIST OF PRIORITIES FOR REVIEW AND REPAIR AS HIS NEWLY-ELECTED GOVERNMENT BEGINS TO FUNCTION. MOREOVER, ANY REVIVAL IN THE MINERALS AND ENERGY SECTOR, VITAL TO FRASER'S PROJECTED INVESTMENT-LED RECOVERY OF THE ECONOMY, WILL DEPEND HEAVILY ON A GROWING JAPANESE MARKET.

5. BUT ALTHOUGH COMMENTARY ON THE ANTHONY VISIT HAS TENDED TO FOCUS ON POSSIBILITIES FOR INCREASED AUSTRALIAN EXPORTS OF MINERALS, PARTICULARLY URANIUM, TO JAPAN, IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO EXPECT THAT THE JAPANESE WILL BE EQUALLY INTERESTED IN PROBING MR. ANTHONY FOR INDICATIONS OF THE GENERAL TRADE POLICY LINE TO BE EXPECTED FROM THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THE JAPANESE WERE PROBABLY AS BROADLY AFFECTED BY THE SERIES OF AUSTRALIAN IMPORT RESTRAINTS WHICH WERE IMPOSED IN 1975 AS ANY OF AUSTRALIA'S TRADING PARTNERS. THEY NO DOUBT WERE NOT REASSURED BY FRASER'S CAMPAIGN STATEMENTS WITH REGARD TO THE CONTINUING NEED FOR PROTECTION. THE IMPORTANCE AUSTRALIA PLACES ON ITS RELATIONS WITH JAPAN, HOWEVER, MAY WELL SERVE AS A MODERATING INFLUENCE ON THE COALITION'S MORE EXTREME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PROTECTIONIST PROCLIVITIES. THIS HAS IN FACT BEEN SUGGESTED TO US IN INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH A MIDDLE LEVEL OFFICER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF OVERSEAS TRADE. END COMMENT. PERCIVAL

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